

## Chapter 1

# What Squarespace Can Do for You

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding the ways to create a website
  - ▶ Discovering the benefits of Squarespace
  - ▶ Reviewing the different levels of support offered by Squarespace
  - ▶ Building just about any website
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**S**quarespace is about making everything easy. If you can click a mouse or tap a trackpad, you can certainly build a website on Squarespace without knowing a lick of code.

When building your website, you'll want a solution that is easy to use, enables you to create a custom design, and provides helpful resources and support from real people. In this chapter, I show how Squarespace meets these requirements.

## *Knowing Your Options*

You can create web pages in several ways. You can write all the code by hand, you can use desktop software such as Dreamweaver or FrontPage, or you can use an online solution such as Squarespace.

### *Do-it-yourself options*

In the past, people coded their own websites from scratch because website builders generated messy and disorganized code, resulting in websites that loaded slowly and often didn't work correctly. Today, many good web designers still code custom HTML and CSS even if they also use the following options because they get maximum control over the details of their websites.

## *Online versus offline*

Some people build and maintain websites using desktop applications installed on their computers such as Adobe Dreamweaver or Microsoft Expression. Those who go this route must set up and organize online data hosting and domain registration, send files to and from servers using FTP, and buy expensive software and updates, which can be used on only the one computer on which they were installed. An offline solution can offer many benefits and flexibility but can also result in unnecessary headaches and hardships, particularly if you're not comfortable transferring files to a web server, writing code, and designing a site from scratch.

Even if you find a simpler desktop software solution that offers entry-level access to building a website (such as RapidWeaver from Realmac Software), you're limited to maintaining your website on the one computer on which the software is installed. Plus, you won't be able to take advantage of using mobile devices to update your website, and you still have the responsibility of setting up web hosting on a server.

Online solutions let you create a website or a blog from your web browser. The entire experience takes place online. Ease of use, both in website setup and management, is the primary reason to choose an online solution such as Squarespace. Online solutions also free you from having to maintain offline versions of your site. Everything is hosted within the service, so you don't have to transfer pages to a web server. In addition, you can access your site from multiple computers and devices to make updates or add new content.

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### **Reviewing the history of Squarespace**

In 2003, Anthony Casalena was looking for a way to publish a website. None of the solutions he tried efficiently brought together everything he needed to publish even a basic website with static pages and a blog, so he decided to build what he needed. He spent his days attending college classes and his nights pursuing his coding hobby. Before long, he built Squarespace, which simplified the most difficult parts of building a website, whether adding content to a blog entry or designing a custom style. After sharing the software with friends, Anthony realized that he had built something that would be useful to others as well.

In the beginning, Anthony maintained the development of the Squarespace platform, responded to support inquiries, and actively promoted the company. Squarespace has now grown into a company hosting nearly 2 million websites. Bloggers, artists, businesses, and all manner of professionals have chosen Squarespace as their home on the web. To host all these sites, Squarespace has built a robust hosting infrastructure, storing website data across multiple servers to fully protect data and ensure that websites almost never go down.

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Online solutions — sometimes referred to as content management systems (CMS) — enable you to not only build a website but also add, edit, and manage the pages and content on your site. Two major categories of content management systems are available. One type of CMS is manually uploaded to your own web host's servers, similar to how you transfer files when using an offline website builder such as Dreamweaver. Squarespace is one of those other types of CMS solutions, self-hosted and preinstalled on a web server for you, so you have one less setup step.

## *Building a Website with Ease*

Gone are the days where setting up your website required painstaking hours of methodical attention to detail and dealing with techno-babble and difficult web services.

Squarespace makes the process of building your site as easy as building a tower of blocks, just like when you were a kid. To add content and features to your pages, you simply add the appropriate Squarespace block. (See Chapters 10–14 for more information about blocks.) If you want to rearrange your pages or content, just drag and drop.

In addition, Squarespace provides limitless options for the look of your site. Their professionally crafted templates enable you to get the most benefit from Squarespace features while allowing your unique style to show through. Designing your own website has never been easier. (See Chapters 6 and 7 for more information about styling your website.)

## *Sign up in less than a minute*

Signing up for a Squarespace account takes less than a minute and requires you to provide just your name, your e-mail address, and a password.

You don't even have to worry about choosing a pricing plan from the start. You get to choose that after your free trial account.

## *Don't worry about hosting*

If you were to create a website using ExpressionEngine or Dreamweaver, you would need to sign up for a separate service dedicated to hosting websites. Squarespace removes this task by hosting your site for you.

As you build your site on Squarespace, your files (pages, content, media, and so on) are automatically stored on the integrated website hosting system. The files are properly formatted and organized to ensure that your website is optimized for listing in search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, and Bing. In addition, Squarespace loads your site pages quickly because everything is stored on multiple web servers.

Two key benefits of Squarespace hosting your website are

- ✓ **Dependability:** No one can offer a 100 percent uptime guarantee, but Squarespace comes close with an industry-leading track record of 99.98 percent uptime (at the time of this writing). All its websites are published using multiple servers in a cloud infrastructure. If one server goes down, the rest of the servers can fill that gap until the malfunctioning server is repaired or replaced.
- ✓ **Limitless bandwidth and storage:** If you sign up for one of the two top pricing plans (see the next section for more on pricing), you get unlimited bandwidth and storage — without the delays common with other services. No more worrying about going over a set limit. You can add as many pictures and files as you like, as long as each one is less than 15MB.

## *Get support 24/7*

Squarespace provides a number of ways for you to get help when you need it: a knowledge base, e-mail technical support, live chat, video workshops, and an online forum.

### *Full-featured knowledge base*

Finding or figuring out answers to your questions is the best way to learn something new. The easiest way to find your answers is by using the Squarespace knowledge base at <http://help.squarespace.com>. It provides detailed information on features and functionality as well as links to how-to videos that answer the most frequently asked questions. Use the search feature to find particular words or phrases, or navigate through the sections by category.

The support team updates the knowledge base when new features are introduced and adds entries based on feedback from customers.

### *Fast e-mail technical support*

Squarespace provides e-mail technical support by real people, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Submit a message to the support ticket system and receive an e-mail reply in less than an hour. And if the support staff can't

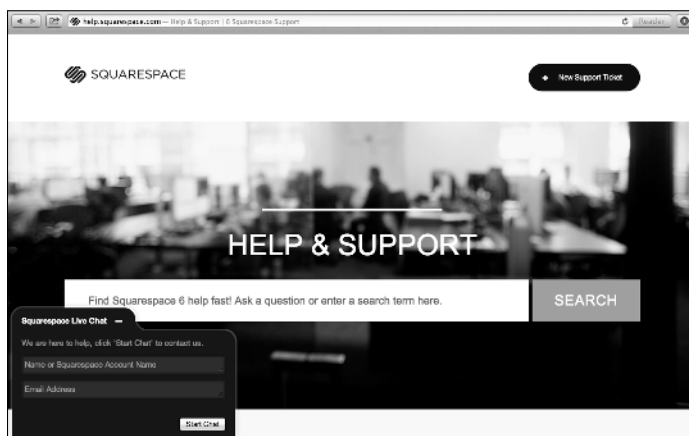
resolve an issue, they have direct access to a crew of engineers and developers who can clarify tough problems or report suggestions to improve the product.



If you need to contact support about an issue or a question, make sure to provide detailed information about what's happening on your site, the relevant page, and the steps to reproduce the issue.

### ***Super-fast live chat***

If you have a simple question or need something addressed instantly, send your inquiry by live chat. You can reach live chat from Monday through Friday between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. The live chat window, shown in Figure 1-1, is available on all pages of the help site.



**Figure 1-1:**  
Chatting  
with  
Square-  
space  
support.



If you have a detailed question or issue, submitting a support ticket is usually better than requesting a live chat.

### ***Videos, workshops, and hangouts***

Watching videos are a great way to learn how to do something. Squarespace has a collection of videos in the knowledge base to show you how to use and customize your site. Following is a direct link to a list of articles in the knowledge base that provide video tutorials: <http://help.squarespace.com/customer/portal/topics/172865-help-videos/articles>.

You can also participate in live workshops on Squarespace's Google+ Hangout page at <https://plus.google.com/+squarespace/posts>. If you can't make it to a live workshop, check the archive of their best videos at <http://workshops.squarespace.com>.

### *Community help*

Do you like conversing with other users? Are you seeking help with advanced customizations and custom code? If so, Squarespace Answers is the place for you. Visit <http://answers.squarespace.com> and join other Squarespace users who hang out and help each other with advice on modifying and adding custom code and designs to their Squarespace sites. Heck, we might run across each other in the discussions.



Read the rules of the site before joining and asking questions. For more, visit <http://answers.squarespace.com/faq/>.



Squarespace developed and provides the Answers site for all users, and the company takes part in discussions. However, this doesn't guarantee that Squarespace will answer any question you ask.

### *Developers documentation*

If you're a web professional wanting to know how to build custom designs on Squarespace, you can review documentation about their developer templates and start your own Developer trial account in the Developer Center (<http://developers.squarespace.com>). At the time of this writing, creating a Developer account is still in beta, but this site provides valuable insight and helpful information about developing custom templates on Squarespace.

The Developer Center and a Developer account are for folks who have an advanced understanding about web design. If you're fluent in HTML, CSS, and other web languages, you'll feel right at home and should check it out.

## *Exploiting the Versatility of Squarespace*

Squarespace provides everything you need to create a website:

- ✓ Prebuilt features for adding pages, blogs, picture galleries, forms, and more
- ✓ Automatically built and updated navigation menus
- ✓ Website analytic features
- ✓ Social media widgets that display your latest personal updates from Twitter, Flickr, Foursquare, Instagram, 500px, and more

As described in this section, you can use Squarespace to create just about any website you can think of, such as a simple blog to share your thoughts and writing, a creative portfolio to attract potential clients, or a persuasive business site to promote your company's services.

## *Personal site users and bloggers*

Do you want to create a blog or a personal site that you can use as the center of your online identity? The Squarespace blog page enables you to add multiple entries, much like a diary or written journal. Organize posts by date, tag, or category. Collect comments to facilitate ongoing conversations. Customize the display and style of the posts to best suit your needs — all without touching a bit of code. You can also share images and add social blocks that will pull in content from popular social sites such as Twitter, Flickr, and anyone serving up RSS feeds of your content.

If you want two blogs on your Squarespace site, one for you and another for your business partner or a loved one, simply add two blog pages. Squarespace allows you to add multiple pages of the same page type, or *collection*. (For more information about the types of page modules, see Chapter 8.) And when your blog grows in popularity, with increased traffic and comments, you can expand and add site contributors to contribute to the content and to moderate comments.

## *Business site users*

The primary focuses of a business website are typically interacting and engaging both existing and potential customers. A successful business site will not only share information about the company's products or services but also open a dialogue with clients and prospects to communicate the company's messages and get feedback.

Some businesses favor public discussions facilitated by comments on blog entries. Other businesses prefer to communicate in a more private and controlled fashion through online surveys, contact forms, and frequently asked questions (FAQs) pages. All these options can be set up in minutes using Squarespace's form block to collect information. This information can be e-mailed to you, saved to a Google Docs spreadsheet for manipulating, or downloaded and manipulated in your spreadsheet program of choice, such as Microsoft Excel or Apple Numbers.

## *Website developers*

Squarespace offers a true developer platform that provides you with complete control over the underlying code (HTML, CSS, and JavaScript), allowing you to build just about any type of website. If using LESS Preprocessing, Retina-ready Responsive Image Handling, Git repositories, and SFTP access get you all aflutter, a Squarespace developer account is definitely something for you.

An experienced web designer can create a fully customized website for a client, who could then easily learn to edit the website using Squarespace's built-in features. In addition, Squarespace's business-class support team can handle most of your clients' questions, keeping small web projects from morphing into long-term support nightmares.